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ABSTRACT

The perceptions of novice and expert teachers in urban schools about their preparation through teacher education were studied. It is generally recognized that middle-class white teachers are strangers to urban cultures, and that they often believe the mass media's negative images about low- income African American and Latino communities. Thirty-five novice teachers and 15 experienced teachers were studied over a 2-year period. Novice teachers completed the questionnaire before and after student teaching, and their supervisory teachers completed identical questionnaires at the end of student teaching. Results show that teachers, whether experienced or novices, do not think about culturally responsive pedagogy or reflect on the interaction between culture and teaching. The initial concerns of novice teachers reflected their uneasiness with the urban environment and their students. By the end of student teaching, novice teachers were able to see their students as individuals and to monitor their learning. Student teachers identified enthusiasm and love for children as the most important concept they learned from their course on-site at an elementary school. A literacy study using the children's story "Amazing Grace" by M. Hoffman showed the way in which the text facilitated the discussion of diversity for experienced and novice teachers. Overall, results demonstrate the great degree to which supervision, attitude change, and insight are required in addition to teaching skills for the development of good teachers. (Contains 16 references.) (SLD)

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# Preparing White Teachers for Urban Schools:

## A Compendium of Research

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Introduction

Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn have told us to begin the odyssey to discover a wonderful culture by taking the New York City A-train to Harlem (Strayhorn, 1941). It is enlightening, subway tokens in hand, music in our ears, both for our own lives and as one step to learning to teach teachers in urban schools. Another enlightening journey began with our research seven years ago in the form of questions about novice and expert teachers' perceptions about their development in our teacher preparation program. As we pursued the research, our questions became focussed in two areas. One has been overall concern for developing expert pedagogical processes in our teachers. The other has been to help teachers to appreciate and teach children of diverse backgrounds, classes, races and ethnicities. We had previously believed these two interests to be encompassed in a generally excellent teacher preparation, but our learning has led us to the knowledge that "excellent preparation" must be defined so that both concerns are addressed strongly and specifically.

As a consequence of studying our teachers' development, we have sharpened our focus toward the preparation of teachers in a far more diverse world than that from which they have come. After solving one set of problems in teacher

preparation, we developed new questions about other problems. Essentially these current questions involve teaching and learning experiences in urban settings, including our coursework, for novice teachers.

Throughout the studies, we used questionnaires composed of Likert-type items and open-ended questions pertaining to the various courses and components of the teacher education programs at our liberal arts college. Each year we have progressively added more items pertaining to teaching in multicultural settings. We have also changed our program considerably because of what we have learned from our research. We will describe the research, our decisions, and discuss the continuing odyssey.

For the longer paper of which this is part, we have reviewed the literature on developmental issues for teachers, the role of classroom experience and mentors, effects of questionable practice on novice teachers, and models of development for novice to expert teachers (for examples of this literature, Farnham-Diggory, 1994; Goodlad, 1991; Kagan, 1992). At the same time that we are concerned with teachers' development in general, we are even more concerned with the development of their pedagogy with all children. These two complex issues are interwoven as teachers work with children from diverse backgrounds and learning needs. We have used theories of assimilation, culturally responsive

pedagogy and critical pedagogy to frame the issues, both of our research and our teacher preparation program. Most research indicates that teacher education institutions do not do enough in preparing teachers for culturally heterogeneous classrooms (King, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Culturally responsive teachers value, respect, and include children's cultures into their curriculum and classroom lessons. Such teachers reflectively examine their personal beliefs about power, privilege and education. They acknowledge the many dimensions of power and privilege in our society and the impact societal inequities have on children's opportunities to learn. We are mindful that culturally responsive teaching is individual, respectful and appreciative of the richness of experience that individual children bring to their schooling. This is not proclaiming a slogan of "multiculturalism" as a school or teacher's policy (Hoffman, 1996), it is recognition that we all have much to learn about these complex psychological and pedagogical issues.

A serious problem of which we are well aware is that middle-class, white teachers are strangers to urban cultures. Middle class teachers often believe mass media's negative images about low-income African American and Latino communities. Their "dysconscious racism" is often supported through pathological stories about urban children's families, languages and backgrounds and inevitably

revealed through lower academic expectations (King, 1991). Classroom learning activities which are constructed from middle-class life experiences can make little sense to low-income urban children. All too often urban teachers' ignorance of urban cultures is realized in poor teaching and misinterpretations of children's classroom interactions (Delpit, 1992).

In studies reported previously at AERA and published (McDermott et al, 1995; Rothenberg et al, 1993), prospective teachers and their supervisors completed a pre- and post- student teaching questionnaire concerning the perceived impact of education and training on their capabilities to teach. Extensive practica, consisting of over 400 hours in elementary school classrooms, had been introduced to the undergraduate teacher education program. These practica were not part of the graduate school program. The course work for the two groups was similar, based on children's active and integrated learning. Course work in teaching methods stressed the integration of reading, writing, and inquiry through cooperative and collaborative processes.

Results of the data analyses indicated that all the novice teachers in this study began quite confidently in their beliefs about their education, training and ability to teach.After the undergraduates and graduate students completed two student teaching placements data from the supervisory teachers' ranking of the

two groups of student teachers after student teaching indicated differences in perceptions. The supervisors conveyed more positive perceptions about *undergraduate* student teachers' general preparation to teach in specific teaching methods and strategies, and in the general classroom, significant on the Mann-Whitney U Analysis of Covariance at the $p < .05$ level (two-tailed p). (Rothenberg, et al, 1993)

We found also that the undergraduates, who had extensive experience in classrooms, revealed different kinds of thoughts about teaching than the graduate students after their student teaching., indicating a different developmental level as teachers. The undergraduate group frequently wrote comments directly pertaining to children's learning, while the graduate students continued to reflect concerns about their basic teaching skills of lesson planning and classroom management. (McDermott et al, 1995; Rothenberg et al, 1993). It seems clear that novice teachers need to have an active conceptual and pragmatic interaction during their pedagogical education. On the basis of this research, we decided to require a ten-hour practica in schools for each of the first four graduate courses. Since most of our graduate students also work full time, it is difficult to ask more of their time.

After the series of studies concerning teachers' preparation to teach, we

changed the questionnaire to a 31-item Likert scale and two open ended questions which elicited respondents' thoughts about pedagogical preparation and teaching in classrooms with children from diverse cultural backgrounds. As in the previous study, novice teachers completed the questionnaire before and after student teaching, and the supervisory teachers completed identical questionnaires at the end of student teaching and voluntarily mailed their responses to the college.

The first section contained the two open-ended items: 1. *What benefits do you perceive for yourself and your students when teaching in a classroom with children from culturally diverse backgrounds?*;" and 2. "*What concerns do you have for yourself and your students when teaching in a classroom with children from diverse cultural backgrounds?*." The second section, 31 Likert items ranked one to seven, presented general statements about teaching and learning, concerning curriculum goals and objectives in culturally diverse classrooms, teachers changing communication and management styles, and the impact of background, gender or language/dialect on children's learning. Data collections and analyses were the same as in the earlier studies.

We learned that teachers, whether experienced or novice, do <u>not</u> think about culturally responsive pedagogy. Neither student teachers nor their cooperating teachers reflected on the interaction between culture and teaching.

The experience of student teaching did not show change in novice teachers' thoughts about culturally responsive pedagogy. Only one item showed a significant change ($p>.05$ from the pre-test) and that was in a direction of less certainty. It is important to note this lack of change in relation to the previous studies, where the novice teachers grew in confidence on most items on the questionnaire. Both novice and experienced teachers indicated that their lack of knowledge about other cultures was their greatest concern when teaching in multicultural classrooms. Recently we developed a more directed look at our pedagogy and what our students, the novice teachers, learn from it. 35 novice student teachers and 15 experienced supervisory teachers formed the subject group of the studies reported here, over a period of two years. The first portion studied the experiences of the novice group in a literacy practicum in a neighboring housing project. The second looked at student/novice perceptions of a pilot project methods course given in an urban school, and the third studied their perceptions and uses of diversity during student teaching in urban, rural or suburban schools. In the last part of the study, we looked particularly at the novices' and experts' hypothetical uses of multicultural literature with children.

In 1994 we began a practica requirement for education students in the fall of their junior year in a public housing project near the college campus. The data

gathered for this analysis was narrative in form. The students kept journals, partly with faculty-focused entries, and the professor recorded daily detailed observations.

Then (and in subsequent semesters) the students' initial reactions have been fear and amazement in the brief walk from the college campus to the housing project. During the practicum, novice teachers' attitudes changed from this fear of their neighbors and a deficit concept of the children's development to the recognition of children and their parents as individuals learning to enjoy reading and writing. Changes observed in our students' attitudes and behaviors about people living in public housing were dramatic, as was the impact of that practica on children's literacy development. This practicum also has expanded the college's sense of community and shared responsibility for life in an urban community (for example, a tutoring center for adults wishing to obtain a high school equilavency degree has recently been established and used extensively by project residents and tutors from the college).

In the spring of 1995, the Reading and Language Arts course was moved to a nearby low-income school. On several previous educational projects college faculty had formed good working relationships with their faculty, and the school was only one mile from college campus. We wanted to create a community of

learners among experienced classroom teachers, college faculty and prospective teachers in which teaching both traditional and innovative teaching methods could be freely discussed and analyzed.

The intent of course was for the college faculty to present ideas for teaching one week, and then have the students present lessons containing the teaching ideas in classrooms the following week. Classroom teachers would provide guidance immediately after the lesson, and the college faculty would observe and conduct discussions about the lessons immediately afterwards in class. However, coordination of the teaching ideas with classroom faculty topics was a problem throughout the semester. Course topics often did not coincide with the classroom curriculum, although topics were distributed to the elementary faculty. To help solve this problem of coordination, the college instructor met weekly with each classroom teacher for a few moments, about what the college students would be teaching in the subsequent week. Topics were writing poetry, responding to literature through illustration, using song and movement in reading and language arts, and integrating the visual arts with literacy learning activities.

Four times during the semester classroom teachers presented language arts lessons to the college students, while the college professor took the classroom teacher's class. These presentations proved to be very well received by the college

students. One classroom teacher spoke about how she established a sense of community in her first grade classroom. Another spoke about inclusion of children with disabilities in regular classroom placements. A third modeled how she thought art teachers could support literacy programs through theme related art activities. A first grade teacher brought her entire class to the upstairs room and demonstrated how she integrated music and dance with literacy.

At the end of semester the students completed a questionnaire about the on-site course, containing items about the impact of the practica, classes with cooperating teachers, and the course topics. The students revealed some startling responses. First in their preference, for example, were the visits of experienced classroom teachers to the course meetings. Second in preference were the practica experiences in elementary classrooms and last were the lectures and presentations from college faculty.

Less startling but somewhat dismaying to the authors, students also indicated that the "most important thing they learned about teaching" from the on-site methods was "compassion for children." They frequently identified enthusiasm and love for children as the most important concept they learned from this on-site course. They wrote about classroom management in terms of what not to do, such as "not yelling at children" and "putting hands on children." Finally,

when asked where they would like more time spent if the course were taught again on-site, they overwhelmingly indicated the highest rank on the practica component. Next in frequency was a near equal distribution of a variety of answers including talking with teachers, integrating the visual and performing arts with literacy, and children's books.

Throughout the semester students prepared focused journal entries about the on-site course. In the second half of the semester we asked them to write about the advantages and disadvantages of participating in an on-site course. More time and experience in actual classrooms were frequently mentioned as advantages and travel, classroom accomodations for adults and placement of students with poor models of teaching were often identified as disadvantages.

After reviewing the results of previous studies, we decided to make more specific the teachers' responses to cultural diversity in their classrooms. We reasoned that by asking teachers what questions they would ask students to begin discussions about literature, we could glimpse, secondhand, a more actual piece of teacher's classroom work. In addition to the questionnaire that we used for two years as previously described, another section was added to the questionnaire as follows:

Assume you are teaching in a third grade elementary class in an

urban school system. A team of teachers is using Mary Hoffman's *Amazing Grace* (Hoffman, ).

*(You might remember that this illustrated book is about an African-American girl who wants to be Peter Pan in her classroom play. The text reveals some of the social issues about diversity that face many children every day. When Grace reveals her interest in becoming Peter Pan, Raj says, "you can't be Peter - that's a boy's name." Natilie whispers, "You can't be Peter Pan, he isn't black." With encouragement from her family, particularly from her grandmother who takes Grace to see the ballet Romeo and Juliet featuring a black ballerina, Grace succeeds in obtaining Peter Pan's role. The classroom play becomes a success and Grace was an amazing Peter Pan. The story ends with the grandmother saying, "If Grace put her mind to it, she can do anything she want.")*

1. What questions would you ask to prepare your urban third graders to read this book?

2. What questions would you ask your students after reading this book to help them understand the story?

Works that have been prominent in our understanding and theoretical base are Vivan Paley's work on her own experiences of teaching children different from herself (1979), King's theoretical and narrative studies of dysconscious rascism (1991), and Ladson-Billings & Tates' theoretical work on race and education (1995). The two overall questions for this aspect of our study concerning teachers' use of literature for teaching were:

1. Are novice and experienced teachers able to hold open discussions about diversity which allow children to use their previous experiences as well as new material, to develop new understandings about people of different gender, skin color, class, ethnicity or culture?

2. Do teachers directly involve issues of gender, race, and class in their discussions with children?

For the first question, teachers' use of prior knowledge with textual material was rated. Our assumption was that the material was explicitly about race and gender, so the use of children's prior knowledge would accomplish the purpose of engaging children in new understandings about others. For the second question, the presence or absence of the issues of race, class or gender in the teachers' questions was rated. This was a liberal interpretation of the teacher's intent to address issues of equality, again because the book is so explicitly directed. Reliability between the raters was 85%.

Questionnaires were administered to the novice teachers at their first meeting with the college faculty, just prior to beginning teaching. The questionnaires were distributed to the experienced teachers who have been supervising these novices at the end of seven weeks. The questionnaires were again administered to the novices and experienced teachers after student teaching.

In these results, we found that experienced teachers were more willing to enter into open discussions than the novice teachers, which is not surprising. Eighty percent of the experienced teachers' responses included prior knowledge. Forty percent of the novice teachers' responses used prior knowledge which would lead to more open discussions among children and the teacher. Although the student/novice teachers are taught to use prior knowledge in conjunction with

text, this is pedagogy which requires practice. Responses that include prior knowledge are "I would do a short game of role play and have students be one-another (different genders), then move into the book"; or "I would ask the children what they thought the title meant and ask them to predict something about the story from the cover of the book". Examples of responses which do not include prior knowledge are: "I would tell them about Peter Pan;" "Was Grace a good Peter Pan? Was it a good idea to allow Grace to play Peter Pan?."

In addressing issues of equality, both novices and experienced teachers appeared reluctant. Only thirty-nine percent of the novice teachers responded with questions concerning race, class or gender; and forty-eight percent of the experienced teachers responded with such questions. We thought these results were particularly striking because we had specifically asked them to address ethnic and cultural diversity, and the book was explicitly about these issues. Thirteen of the thirty-five novice teachers and four of the thirteen experienced respondents (two did not complete this section) did not mention issues of diversity or prior knowledge at all. Examples which include issues of equality are: "What are the different characters' characteristics? what makes this play/book different? Do all the characters need to be the same color?"; and "How would they feel if they were Grace? Why is it wrong to not allow someone to so something because of what

they look like?" Examples of not including issues of diversity are:"Who's Peter Pan? Romeo and Juliet?"; and "Do you think that Raj and Natile were right to comment to Grace? How did Grace react to them?"

Currently we have taken all the "Methods" courses (reading and language arts, social studies, math and science) into six urban schools. We supervise our students, who are in the schools from 8:00 to 11:00 A.M., and then teach Methods in the schools in the afternoons. So far, in moving into the schools with our students, we clearly are facing dilemmas and grappling with issues all the time. Modeling integrated planning with our students (the novice teachers) takes enormous time and energy, particularly as we cart our supplies and activities from campus to elementary schools. Taking over elementary classrooms ourselves while teachers interact with our students is anxiety provoking to be sure. Deciding the line between tact and rage at bad practices is a constant internal threat to our emotional equilibria and professional demeanors. The professor teaching the Science Methods course had a particularly difficult time working to promote inquiry based projects like hatchng frogs' eggs and building terrariums in schools that were not prepared for such inquiry projects.

Subjectively it seems worth it. The schools are extremely welcoming and our students/novice teachers show many things we have been hoping to see: initial

uncertainty and fear and lack of knowledge about the children, developing professional attitudes and behaviors that carry into our Methods classrooms, growing connections with the children and their teachers, a sense of colleagiality with us. In evaluating the Methods courses, the student/teachers commented on our difficulties at integrating their course work. We found this encouraging since when we taught the courses on campus, this subject never occurred to the students. Currently we are integrating the new spring semester, with one syllabus, and more integrated requirements, such as requiring continued a thematic unit across the courses (various aspects of Africa), rather than separate assignments for each course.

In our preliminary evaluation we have asked the student/teachers pre-and post- the semester course work what questions they had about teaching in the urban schools. Again, questions before they began revolved primarily around fear and topical concerns: substance abuse in the children's homes, poverty caused diseases, violence among adults, child abuse. After the semester their questions were primarily pedagogical and oriented to children's learning, in addition to questions about resource allocation in the urban schools. The latter is a major point in this city because the range of resources in the urban schools is notable, from a new open community-based school to old and decrepit buildings.

One of the insights from this pre-post study was the small degree of change in thinking about urban teaching this group of student/teachers had made -- through the two previous practica in the housing project and neighboring school. Each time we felt the students made gains, and each time they indicated to us how ingrained are their previously developed beliefs and responses.

Discussion

Early in this paper we said that we had always thought good teacher preparation would cover the essentials of all types of teaching. While we still believe that, both theoretically and practically, our understanding of such an overly simple statement has changed radically. Particularly, we have known all along that great psychological complexity underlies teaching, but we have been reluctant to take the implications of that complexity seriously in our work. Every teacher's personality, memories, family background, life experiences figure in moment-by-moment classroom work. The research on belief systems and memories of school is compelling in this regard (Hollingsworth, 1989; Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Rothenberg, 1993). The implications of what we have observed, counted and codified, and reflected upon, lead us to think about the great degree to which supervision, attitudinal change and insight are required in addition to pedagogical skills, for the development of good teachers. We feel that the results

of our recent studies indicate there is much to be done in preparing novice teachers to respect, appreciate, and teach diverse children well. Activities that have been most successful with the novice teachers have focused on aspects of children's lives within both the school and the community. We also see that focused and reflective journal entries are helpful to the novice teachers.

Teachers used to live and participate in the communities in which they taught. Teacher education institutions often required their students to visit children's families and participate in community events. This no longer occurs, and teachers are unknowledgeable about children's cultural backgrounds. At the same time, teachers appear to ignore the richness of culture that diverse classrooms bring to them and their students. With our novice teachers, there are glimmers of change in this regard. They recognize areas of new learning, such as the positive aspects of children's speaking two languages and living in at least two cultures. They know the importance of celebrating cultural events from the community; as they do this, they learn about the children's and their parents'lives.

Teachers in a multicultural society must learn to teach and construct learning environments through the cultures of their students. The consequences of not using culture to teach are disastrous in a multicultural society. Real and significant change on these matters of culture and pedagogy are desperately

needed for real social change, equity and justice.

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